



APPROVED JAN. 27, 2022

## LANDMARK REGISTRATION FORM

### PART I: PROPERTY INFORMATION

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name: VASA HALL

other names/site number: SKOGSBLOMMAN LODGE NO. 378

#### 2. Location

street address: 10530 324th Place SE, Issaquah, WA 98027

parcel no(s): 032307-9030

legal description(s): King County Parcel Viewer: BAAP N 66-30-00 E 150.00 FT ALG SCHOOL GROUNDS FENCE FR PT ON NELY MGN OF CO RD # 399 51.00 FT N & 63.00 FT E OF SW COR OF NW 1/4 OF NW 1/4 OF SW 1/4 TH S 66-30-00 W 150.00 FT TH N 20-00-00 W ALG SD MGN 193.00 FT TH N 66-30-00 E 181.00 FT TH S 50-00-00 E ALG SWLY MGN OF CO RD # 1239 100.60 FT TH SWLY TAP N 20-00-00 W OF BEG TH S 20-00-00 E 80.00 FT TO BEG LESS C/M RGTS

#### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property:

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

#### 4. Property Owner(s)

name: Skogsblozman Lodge No. 378

street: 10530 324th Place SE

city: Issaquah

state: WA

zip: 98037

#### 5. Form Prepared By

name/title: Florence K. Lentz and Sarah J. Martin, consulting historians

organization: Contracted consultants on behalf of  
Skogsblozman Lodge No. 378

date: December 15, 2021

## 6. Nomination Checklist

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site Map (REQUIRED)  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continuation Sheets |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photographs (REQUIRED): <i>please label or caption photographs and include an index</i>          | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please indicate):       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Last Deed of Title: <i>this document can usually be obtained for little or no cost from a title company</i> |   |

## Research Methodology & Acknowledgements

Consulting historians Flo Lentz and Sarah Martin completed research and drafted this report between September and December 2021. Research included correspondence with the King County Historic Preservation Office, Washington State Archives Puget Sound Regional Branch, and the Issaquah History Museums, as well as review of Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 collections, secondary-source literature, and numerous online collections. Lentz and Martin conducted field surveys at Upper Preston on August 13 and September 21, 2021. The fieldwork included photographic documentation and visual inspection of the the former mill sites at Preston and Upper Preston, the Upper Preston community setting, and the Vasa Hall exterior and interior.

The authors wish to thank longtime Lodge member Bonnie Eiber and Preston historian Ed Holmes for their insights and research contributions, as well as Erica Maniez and Julie Hunter with Issaquah History Museums for their assistance.

## PART II: PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### 7. Alterations

Check the appropriate box if there have been changes to plan, cladding, windows, interior features or other significant elements. These changes should be described specifically in the narrative section below.

- |   |                             |  |   |                             |  |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Plan (i.e. no additions to footprint, relocation of walls, or roof plan) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Interior features (woodwork, finishes, flooring, fixtures) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Cladding   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes            | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Other elements   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | Windows  |   |                             |  |

### Narrative Description

Use the space below to describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance, condition, architectural characteristics, and the above-noted alterations (use continuation sheet if necessary).

#### Introduction

Preston's Vasa Hall, the physical home of Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378, is a modest wood-frame building in the unincorporated community of Upper Preston. The hall is the sole communal structure still standing in what was once a tight-knit Swedish settlement centered around a busy sawmill. Vasa Hall has experienced moderate physical changes since its construction in 1949-1950, a testament to its continued cultural role and steady use over time (Figures C1 and B14).

#### Setting

The larger community of Preston lies roughly 22 miles east southeast of Seattle, in the western foothills of the Cascades (Figure A1). Beyond the city of Issaquah, which marks the edge of the Puget Sound lowlands, the terrain begins to climb and the landscape becomes forested. Preston proper is located in a terraced valley of the Raging River, a tributary of the Snoqualmie. The town straddles two historic transportation corridors. One is the old Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern Railroad (acquired by the Northern Pacific in 1893) that is now the Preston-Snoqualmie Trail (Figure C7). The other is the 1915 Sunset Highway, now the Preston-Fall City Road, which once connected Seattle to the Snoqualmie Valley and points east (Figure C2).

Preston today is an unincorporated exurban community, with a residential population of around 500. The setting is still remarkably forested and rural in character, despite bisection of the entire community by the I-90 corridor. On the lowest terrace in town is the site of the Preston Lumber Co.'s former planing and shingle mills (now Preston Mill Park), the old Swedish Baptist church, and houses dating from the heyday of the mill (Figure C3). On middle hill, west of the main road, stands the 1939 Preston Community Center, the 1904 August Lovegren House, and early-day housing contemporary with the operation of the mills, and the sites of the former hotel, company store, and post office (Figures C4, C5, C6). On top hill is the public trail along the old railroad grade and the site of the former depot and loading docks (Figure C7).

Upper Preston is physically separated from Preston proper by a distance of nearly two miles. An access road to Upper Preston leads off the main highway and parallels I-90 before crossing under it, climbing deeper and higher into the V-shaped valley of the Raging River (Figure A2). Here at Upper Preston, the

Preston Lumber Co. ran a third sawmill for raw timber from 1897 to 1929. Today the former mill site, located just south of and down slope from the extant town, is re-vegetated and hard to discern (Figure A5). But the townsite has kept its early street layout, nearly all of its historic worker housing, and Vasa Hall, home of Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 (Figures C8, C9, and C10).

The hall faces generally west toward 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE on an irregular-shaped parcel of land just under one acre in size. This is the primary street through the heart of Upper Preston. Adjoining the property to the north is an undeveloped King County-owned parcel labeled Instebo Park on maps. To the south is a large sunny lot occupied by the community well (Figures A3, A4, and C11). One private home fronting on Upper Preston Road stands directly behind the hall. Next to this home, on Vasa Hall property, is an expansive garden tended by the neighbor and shared with the hall. A small playhouse for children interpreted as a Swedish summer cottage, or stuga, was added to the site in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

### **Vasa Hall Exterior**

Today's hall is the second iteration of Skogsblomman Lodge in Upper Preston. The first hall was destroyed by fire in 1943. Still visible around and underneath the footprint of the current hall are the remnants of rubble concrete foundation from the earlier building (Figures A4, B8, and C14). The hall consists of four primary sections: the main assembly hall, a kitchen/lobby wing running perpendicular to it, a storage/stage wing to the rear, and a more recent gable-roofed porch at the front. Except for the assembly hall, which is one and one-half stories in height, all of the building is single-story. Except for the front porch, all of the building has a flat roof configuration (Figure C12).

The current Vasa Hall is notable in that it was built largely from materials salvaged from an old company store in the nearby mill town of Snoqualmie Falls. The assembly hall section measures 66' by 31' and does reflect to some extent the boxy massing of the old company store. The extra height on this section encloses an attic. Early photos of the company store show a far more voluminous interior, with functional clerestory windows all around giving light to a mezzanine (Figures B9 and B10). But it appears that the reassembled hall in Upper Preston always included a lowered ceiling with an unfinished attic above (Figure C13). Original cedar shingle siding, now painted, covers the rear and north exterior, while the front and south sides are clad with Hardie Board shingles and horizontal siding, respectively. Three louvered shutters over clerestory openings on the north side, and some on the back side, provide ventilation and access to the attic (Figure C14). Windows at the ground level of the assembly hall are recent vinyl sliders. There is one set of newer double doors, with steps and a landing of rubble concrete on the south side (Figure C15).

The kitchen wing, which includes the lobby and restrooms, measures 60' by 16'. A small addition to the kitchen wraps around the side of the assembly hall giving the kitchen a depth of 24' at that end (Figure C16). A simple boxed eave cornice encircles the roofline. Siding consists of Hardie Board shingles (Figure C17). Windows appear to have been largely replaced with new aluminum, vinyl, or wood sash over time. Most do not match those in the 1956 King County Assessor's photo, although the arrangement of window openings has not changed (Figure B14). There are simple double doors at

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<sup>1</sup> Lodge members John and Karin Bader had the stuga built in the early 1980s for their granddaughter to use as a playhouse.



the lobby entrance. On the south face of the kitchen is a side door with a deep overhang, rubble concrete steps, and a landing.

The rear storage room wing measures 18' by 31'. It forms a single-story extension to the main assembly hall and was clearly in place in the 1956 Tax Assessor photo. Today the addition is clad with Hardie Board on the south, and cedar shingles to the rear and north. There are two vinyl slider windows at the rear providing light to the storage rooms.

The front porch measures roughly 15' by 15' and includes a recently-added wheelchair access ramp. Prior to construction of the porch in 1996, the front of Vasa Hall was quite plain, with a shallow overhang over a simple landing at the entry. Today's porch features a smooth concrete slab and steps covered by a deep gabled roof. Bargeboard trim and railings with incised Swedish motifs add to the ethnic character of the hall (Figure C18).

### **Vasa Hall Interior**

The assembly hall is largely intact on the interior (Figures C19 and C20). Along the length of the hall are two sets of projecting pilasters with triangular bracing. Features and finishes thought to be original include six hanging light fixtures, acoustical ceiling tiles, vertical wall panels of pressboard, and wide bead-boarded wainscotting (Figure C21). The hardwood floor has been recently refinished. In the southwest corner, below the brick chimney, is an oil furnace that replaces an earlier wood stove. In this same area, a former pass-through into the kitchen has been infilled and the doorway to the kitchen enlarged. The only other notable change in the assembly hall is the application of colorful stenciled motifs by artist Caroline Purser along the upper wall surfaces, columns and braces.

An entry hall or lobby occupies the north one-third of the kitchen wing. It contains two restrooms tucked off to the side, and a 1990s wheelchair-accessible restroom that extends into the lobby area. The lobby itself has newer acoustical ceiling tiles and modern beadboard wainscotting, wooden pegs for coats, and a vinyl tile floor (Figures C22 and C23). Double doors lead into the assembly hall.

The kitchen fills the south two-thirds of this perpendicular wing. It has undergone the most change of any interior space in terms of functionality, but plenty of older finishes remain in place. A narrow beadboard ceiling, vertical pressboard walls, and painted upper cabinets appear original. New lower cabinets, oak countertops, and modern sheet flooring are some of the more recent alterations. In the small kitchen addition are some pine-panel and sheetrock finishes, along with extra cabinets and broom closets (Figure C24).

The stage and storage room wing at the east end of the assembly hall appears in a 1950 photo taken at the grand opening of the Vasa Hall, and also in a revised King County Assessor property record floor plan (Figures B12 and B14 through B16). On the interior this wing is essentially unchanged. A picturesque little stage is elevated and inset between the two storage spaces, facing the assembly hall. The stage still retains its original flooring and wall finishes, including a mural of a pastoral landscape in

Sweden (Figures C19 and C25).<sup>2</sup> The storage rooms are roughly identical in layout with shelving set up along either side. The rooms connect to one another along a raised platform with a wire-enclosed cage behind the stage. The storage rooms have unpainted fir doors, and their walls and ceilings are finished with horizontal beadboard.

## Changes Over Time

Not all modifications and maintenance measures at Vasa Hall since its construction in 1950 can be dated with certainty. Some can be approximated by dated photos, while others come from oral sources (Bonnie Eiber and others).

- Kitchen addition – the kitchen at the southeast corner was expanded, with new access to the assembly hall, and new egress to a covered stoop. It was added sometime between 1956 and 1976, based on King County Assessor property record floorplans (Figure B16).
- Storage and stage wing – this provided performance capacity and critical organizational storage. The stage with people on it appears in a 1950 photograph of the grand opening of the new Vasa Hall (Figure B12). Its exterior appears in the 1956 King County Assessor property record photographs (Figures B14 and B15).
- An oil furnace replaced the wood stove in the 1960s.
- A front porch addition, an accessible restroom, lobby and bathroom improvements, and kitchen cabinets were completed in 1996.
- The roof was replaced in 2009.
- There was work to the kitchen and building foundation in 2013.
- Exterior shingles on the south and east sides were replaced with Hardie Board; cedar shingles on the north and west sides were painted; the chimney was repointed; and French drains were installed in 2017.
- The furnace was again replaced and the assembly hall floor was refinished in 2018.
- Acoustical ceiling tiles in the kitchen were removed to expose the beadboard ceiling in 2020.

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<sup>2</sup> Stories passed down said that the landscape scene was of Jamtland, from where many of the Upper Preston residents came. It was painted by Robert Johanson, descendent of Matilda Johanson. The mural has been preserved as a memorial to Bob Johanson, who disappeared in 1984 and was never found.

## PART III: HISTORICAL / ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

### 8. Evaluation Criteria

#### Designation Criteria:

- ☒ A1 Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of national, state, or local history.
- ☐ A2 Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in national, state, or local history.
- ☐ A3 Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, style, or method of design or construction or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ A4 Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.
- ☐ A5 Property is an outstanding work of a designer or builder who has made a substantial contribution to the art.

#### Criteria Considerations:

##### Property is

- ☐ a cemetery, birthplace, or grave or property owned by a religious institution/used for religious purposes
- ☐ moved from its original location
- ☐ a reconstructed historic building
- ☐ a commemorative property
- ☐ less than 40 years old or achieving significance within the last 40 years

### Historical Data (if known)

Date(s) of Construction: 1949-50	Other Date(s) of Significance:	
Architect: N/A	Builder: Community members	Engineer: N/A

### Statement of Significance

Describe in detail the chronological history of the property and how it meets the landmark designation criteria. Please provide a summary in the first paragraph (use continuation sheets if necessary). If using a Multiple Property Nomination that is already on record, or another historical context narrative, please reference it by name and source.

### Introduction

Preston's Vasa Hall is the headquarters of a local chapter of the Vasa Order of America. Officially named Skogsblomman (forest flower) Lodge No. 378, the group was founded in 1919 by first-generation Swedish employees of the Preston Lumber Co. The organization's first hall was destroyed by fire in 1943. The current building was assembled in 1950 from materials salvaged from the old company store at the nearby mill town of Snoqualmie Falls. Throughout its century of service, Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 has nurtured the Swedish cultural heritage and social life and of the close-knit community of Upper Preston. This hall reflects that continuing mission.

**The Preston Vasa Hall meets King County Landmark Criterion A1** – *association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local history.*

Timber was the leading industry of Western Washington and King County from the mid- 19th century to the Great Depression. During this same time period, large numbers of Swedish immigrants to the Pacific Northwest gravitated to central Puget Sound, making a lasting mark in Seattle and King County. These two broad patterns of history, **timber** and **Swedish settlement**, are intertwined in the economic and social backstory of the mill town of Preston. Vasa Hall in Upper Preston embodies an especially successful, long-lived, and multi-generational bond among people of common heritage.

### **Timber Industry Context**

#### **Logging and Saw-Milling in Washington**

The vast virgin forests of Western Washington were long its most valuable natural resource. For generations, indigenous people had made practical use of tall conifers for shelter, transportation, and tools of all kinds. Maritime fur traders began harvesting trees north of the Columbia River for ship timbers in the late 1820s. The earliest settlers to the Puget Sound country only survived their first difficult years by selling logs to a booming California market fueled by the discovery of gold.<sup>3</sup>

But the dense stands of timber stretching from the Olympic Peninsula to Fort Vancouver offered opportunities for wealth on a much grander scale. From out of San Francisco, well-backed lumber barons of New England acquired massive holdings to the north. At strategic points they carved mill towns out of the wilderness along the shorelines of Puget Sound and Hood Canal at ports Gamble, Ludlow, Blakely, Madison, and Seabeck. Over the next three decades, they shipped a steady supply of pilings, spars, and squared timbers south to the City by the Bay.<sup>4</sup>

This singular California focus was altered in the late 1880s by the arrival of transcontinental railroads - along with Washington's statehood, a surge in its population, and the rapid growth of cities on Puget Sound. In this region, the financial panic of the early 1890s was largely erased by the exuberance of the Klondike gold rush of 1898. Meanwhile, the timber industry had shifted its sights from San Francisco and the oceanic trade, to exploitation of the rail market. By the end of the 19th century, newly arrived investors from the Great Lakes region were poised to buy up timber lands west of the Cascades. Frederick Weyerhaeuser negotiated the purchase of 900,000 acres of timber from the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1900, making his company the second largest private holder of timber in the United States, and the dominant force in the forest industry of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>5</sup>

The return of prosperity in the late 1890s ushered in unprecedented growth in Western Washington. Tacoma doubled its population, and Seattle and Everett tripled in size. All of this growth resulted in a soaring demand for building materials – framing, siding, sash and doors, moldings, trim, and shingles. The number of sawmills in the state grew from just over 300 in 1899 to well over 1,000 by the end of 1907. These numbers don't count manufactories built to produce the endless variety of wooden

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<sup>3</sup> Robert Ficken, *The Forested Land: A History of Lumbering in Western Washington*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987), xiii.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., xiii-xiv, 88-91.

objects then used in everyday life: barrels, crates, boxes, and tubs; planking for streets and sidewalks; furniture, tool handles, gutters, and ladders. In 1905, Washington State emerged as the leading producer of lumber in the United States.<sup>6</sup>

### Major Operations in King County

Timber dominated the economy of King County from the 1850s into the first three decades of the 20th century. When Henry Yesler arrived at Elliott Bay from California in 1853, he launched the area's first steam-powered sawmill. His choice of site was critical for the future townsite of Seattle. For some years, the ever-evolving Yesler's Mill provided jobs for a diverse work force, including indigenous people, as well as building materials for the growing community. Around the county, smaller water-powered sawmills sprouted up in quick succession on Black River, Snoqualmie River, at Lake Sammamish and around the shores of Lake Washington. Initially, these mills were supplied by local settlers who were also its primary customers.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s, an enormous new market for timber products emerged in support of King County's developing coal mines and expanding railroad lines. At Renton, Newcastle, and Black Diamond, mining operations required a constant supply of heavy timbers for tunnels and shafts, as well as worker housing. The Seattle and Walla Walla Railroad, the incoming Cascade Branch of the Northern Pacific, and finally the Seattle, Lakeshore and Eastern Railroad all required bridge timbers and railroad ties. To log the difficult terrain of these inland locations required new methods and technologies. Teams of oxen gave way to steam-powered donkey engines, and skid roads to narrow-gauge logging railroads. All manner of ingeniously designed chutes, tramways and flumes moved raw timber from the woods, to the mills, and to shipment points on water and rail.<sup>8</sup>

By the mid-1880s, a new demand for sawn cedar shingles from Washington swept the Midwest. In Seattle, shingle mills sprang up in the growing settlement of Ballard, which soon became known as the shingle capital of the world. Others opened for business in far corners of King County. Some shingle mills were independent, others associated with sawmills. Shingle milling remained tenuous at best, given the vagaries of over-production, high freight rates, and rail car shortages.<sup>9</sup>

A report in *The Coast Magazine* in June of 1909 paints a clear picture of the local industry in a moment of boom and significant investment, prior to corporate consolidations to come. The author wrote:

*Lumbering is the largest producing industry in King County. Outside of the city of Seattle there are hundreds of mills manufacturing lumber and shingles and large logging operations....*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 104-105. Clarence Bagley, *History of King County, Washington, vol. 1*, (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1929), 254.

<sup>7</sup> Bagley, *History of King County*, 243-246. Sharon Boswell, "King County Historic Settlement Context, 1850-1920," (King County Historic Preservation Program, 2017), 100. Accessed Sept. 7, 2021. [https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/services/home-property/historic-preservation/documents/resources/king\\_county\\_historic\\_context\\_vol\\_1.ashx?la=en](https://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/services/home-property/historic-preservation/documents/resources/king_county_historic_context_vol_1.ashx?la=en)

<sup>8</sup> Boswell, "King County Historic Settlement Context, 1850-1920," 100-101.

<sup>9</sup> Walt Crowley, "Seattle Neighborhoods: Ballard—A Thumbnail History," (HistoryLink.org Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History, Essay #983, 1999). Accessed Oct. 14, 2021. <https://historylink.org/File/983>. Boswell, "King County Historic Settlement Context, 1850-1920," 102.

*Scattered over hills and valleys between tide-water and the summit of the Cascade Mountains are hundreds of thousands of feet of timber which [h]as not yet been touched by the large operations....<sup>10</sup>*

The same report gives a snapshot of twenty well-capitalized operations in King County, at least six of them with semi-permanent settlements that grew up around a sawmill. These mills employed a relatively high number of workers, with many immigrants from timber-rich countries and the upper Midwest. Company settlements offered cottages for family living, and often boasted a store, a hotel, and other amenities such as electricity. Among them was the Swedish settlement of Preston in east King County. The Preston Lumber Co. owned the company town of 500 (with a school, a church, a general store, and two hotels) along with surrounding timber land, three mills, a lumber flume, and a tramway.<sup>11</sup>

Less than ten years later, in 1916, a major corporate presence emerged amid these privately owned operations. Just five miles east of Preston, by the Snoqualmie River at Lake Borst, the Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co. erected two major sawmills (one for cedar, one for fir) and a large company town. A partnership of the Weyerhaeuser Timber Co. and Grandin Coast Lumber Co., this new facility was the largest forest products plant in King County. The entire operation, including logging in the woods, was powered by electricity. Operations began in April 1917, the same month the United States entered the World War.<sup>12</sup>

The company town at Snoqualmie Falls took shape simultaneously and into the 1920s (Figure A8). Eventually the population reached a peak of 2,000. A hotel-boarding house, a community hall, a school, a hospital, a depot and at least nine neighborhoods of bungalows were built. The very first communal building completed was the company store and post-office, which opened for business in the fall of 1917 (see Figures B9 and B10).<sup>13</sup> Several decades later, in a new era, this company store would be repurposed as the permanent home of Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378, in Upper Preston.

Through the first half of the 20th century, the timber industry in King County closely reflected the ups and downs of the business regionwide. Economic booms and busts, increased competition, over-production, the rise of the labor movement, World War I, and the Depression, all had a direct impact. Small operations gradually disappeared through corporate mergers, bankruptcies, or fires. In 1929 on the eve of the Depression, there were still two-hundred active operations in King County, including at Enumclaw, Selleck, Skykomish, and Snoqualmie Falls. Ultimately, however, urban development and the depletion of virgin timber stands signaled the end of the intense resource extraction phase for King County.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> No Author, "Lumbering Interests of King County," *The Coast* (vol. XVII, June 1909): 380.

<sup>11</sup> Boswell, "King County Historic Settlement Context, 1850-1920," 106.

<sup>12</sup> Boswell, "King County Historic Settlement Context, 1850-1920," 103. Kris Kirby, "Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co. Powerhouse & Brick Stack (Power Plant)," King County Landmark Registration Form, (King County Historic Preservation Program, 2005), 5.

<sup>13</sup> Kirby, "Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co. Powerhouse & Brick Stack (Power Plant)," 7.

<sup>14</sup> Bagley, *History of King County*, 254, 258-259

## Swedish Immigration Context

### From Sweden to America

Over the late decades of the 19th and early 20th centuries, a great wave of northern Europeans migrated across the Atlantic to the United States. Some 1.3 million people from the country of Sweden immigrated to America during this period. Most were young and healthy, eager to take advantage of opportunities for a better life. They came with strong ties to family and friends in particular districts of Sweden, and this resulted in some clear patterns of chain migration in America. The earliest receiving areas became distinct colonies of Swedish pioneers in southern Minnesota, western Wisconsin, Iowa, western Illinois, and central Texas.<sup>15</sup>

Swedish immigration surged to over 97,000 by 1870 when widespread famine devastated the homeland, and continued apace. The 1880s brought the largest single decade of Swedish immigration to the United States. Some 330,000 arrived in that decade alone so that, by 1890, 478,000 first-generation Swedish immigrants lived across the U.S.<sup>16</sup>

By then, Swedish immigrants were primarily seeking to escape Sweden's declining economic conditions. Falling wages, plummeting farm prices, and very long hours, coupled with difficult agricultural inheritance laws and widespread debt, were the primary push factors. The desire for social equality and religious freedom were also factors drawing Swedes across the Atlantic. While Swedish Baptists and other non-Lutherans were no longer persecuted by the State in the 1880s, they were still in the minority and faced discrimination. Baptists not surprisingly made up a disproportionately large percentage of Swedish emigres in the 1880s.<sup>17</sup>

For various reasons, Swedish settlement spread beyond its Midwestern centers to the West Coast in the 1880s. Print advertising by the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads in Europe reached a fever pitch during the decade, part of their push to sell farm lands and generate agricultural product across the northern plains and Rocky Mountains. Word of mouth, letters to loved ones, and return trips to Sweden convinced ever-increasing numbers of extended family to emigrate.<sup>18</sup> The Pacific Northwest offered the added draw of boundless forests, salt water seas, and a marine climate, an environment with which so many Swedes were deeply experienced.

By 1910, there were 665,000 Swedish-born living in America, and the second generation had grown to 700,000, so well over a million of Swedish extraction. Ten percent of those with Swedish heritage lived on the West Coast by 1910, mostly in the states of California and Washington. By that year, Swedish

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<sup>15</sup> Minnesota Historical Society, "Swedish Immigration to the U.S./Svensk invandring till USA," *Swedish American Newspapers* online portal. Accessed Oct. 14, 2021. <https://www.mnhs.org/newspapers/swedishamerican/migration>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood: The Story of Early Preston and Upper Preston, Washington." Unpublished Manuscript, Bellevue Community College (History 299), 1997: 5-6, 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 8-10.

population in Seattle mushroomed to over 19,000, representing over thirty percent of the city's foreign-born.<sup>19</sup>

### Swedish Settlement in King County

In the decades spanning the turn of the century, newly arrived Swedes on central Puget Sound found work in farming, mining, fisheries and ship-building, dock work, logging and milling, town-building, railroading, and business.<sup>20</sup> Swedish-Americans soon played critical leadership roles in the development of Seattle and King County. Today, many businesses, organizations, entities, and historic places associated with their lives and work still contribute to the vitality of the region.

In Seattle, newcomers from Sweden quickly formed an ecosystem of clubs, institutions, churches, and fraternal lodges with social, spiritual, and charitable purposes. At least eight Swedish language newspapers were launched in Seattle between the years 1889 and 1938, serving a highly literate audience. This connective tissue reinforced cultural identity and support systems for mutual aid among first-generation immigrants and subsequent generations.

The venerable Swedish Club, founded in 1892, soon became a who's who of successful Swedish men in Seattle. Its members went on to leave indelible marks in the region. Their mid-century modern clubhouse on Dexter Avenue, completed in 1961, is a recently designated Seattle Landmark. Swedish Hospital, which opened its doors in 1910, grew to become the largest medical services facility in the region. Swedish arrivals in Seattle also organized large and far-reaching Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, and Christian Mission congregations. The latter group built what is now known as the First Covenant Church, a designated Seattle Landmark on lower Capital Hill. The well-loved Nordic Heritage Museum has been in operation for the past 40 years. Located in Ballard, the Seattle neighborhood most closely associated with Swedish settlement, the museum has been recently revitalized as the National Nordic Museum.<sup>21</sup>

During this era the Vasa Order of America, a Swedish fraternal association, took root in the Pacific Northwest. Named after the historic royal house of Sweden, the order was first established in Connecticut in 1883 and spread to the West. It served as a safety net for new arrivals, offering old age and sick benefits, later shifting to a focus on cultural heritage. At first the order was open only to men, but in 1923 it officially broadened its membership to include women. National membership peaked in 1929 at over 72,000. By the time Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 was chartered in 1919 in the tiny logging town of Upper Preston, Washington, at least seven local lodges had been established in communities around the Pacific Northwest (District #13). These included: Spokane, Portland, Hoquiam, Astoria, Missoula, Seattle, and Tacoma.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Marianne Forssblad, "Swedes in Seattle and King County," (HistoryLink.org Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History, Essay #3473, 2001). Accessed Oct. 14, 2021. <https://historylink.org/File/3473>. Minnesota Historical Society, "Swedish Immigration to the U.S./Svensk invandring till USA.

<sup>20</sup> Forssblad, "Swedes in Seattle and King County."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> *30th Grand Lodge Convention Souvenir Booklet*, (Seattle, WA: Vasa Order of America, June 1982), 26. Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. Wikipedia, "Vasa Order of America," 2021. Accessed Nov. 12, 2012. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasa\\_Order\\_of\\_America](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vasa_Order_of_America)



Over these same decades, from the 1890s through the 1920s, Swedish immigrants settled outside the city of Seattle taking up logged off lands in the fertile valleys of King County. Farmsteads associated with Swedish families - from early log houses, to dairy farms, to substantial mansions - have been preserved and designated as King County Landmarks in all corners of the county. These include the:

- Hilmar and Selma Steen House – Vashon
- Erik Gustav Sanders Mansion – Kent
- Mary Olson Farm – Auburn
- Lagesson Homestead – Maple Valley
- Conrad Olson Farmstead – Redmond
- Gunnar Olson House – Redmond
- N.E. and Mathilda Nelson Log House – Woodinville
- Mathilde and Olaf Olson Farm – Maple Valley
- Quaale Log House – Carnation

Extended families of Swedish immigrants, followed by second and third generations, were particularly drawn to the flourishing logging camps, sawmills, and shingle mills of eastern King County. These work forces were diverse, and management especially welcomed experienced Scandinavians. Settlements with a strong Swedish identity emerged around substantial timber operations at Redmond, Enumclaw, and Preston. As the home of Skogsblomman No. 378, Preston and Upper Preston became the most ethnically stable, long-lived, and deeply rooted of King County's mill towns.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Communities of Preston**

August Lovegren, a staunch Swedish Baptist immigrant, was instrumental in establishing the community of Preston in the early 1890s. As a carpenter working in Seattle, he recognized the great demand for lumber in the emerging metropolis. He and five other Swedish men sought a tract of timber that was close to Seattle and to a rail line or waterway. They settled on an area in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains near the Raging River. They purchased land and timber from the Jackson and McDougall Lumber Company within close proximity to the Preston depot of the Seattle, Lakeshore, and Eastern Railroad (later absorbed by Northern Pacific Railway). The town was named Preston, after William T. Preston, an engineer who surveyed the railroad right-of-way through the area.<sup>24</sup>

When the financial Panic of 1893 took hold, Lovegren became the Preston Lumber Company's sole owner. The first few years were extremely hard, but demand rebounded. He moved the operation a few miles east of the first location in 1897, closer to the Raging River where it remained well into the 20th century.<sup>25</sup> Lovegren built a sawmill two miles east at Upper Preston near where Lake Creek meets the Raging River. Once complete, the sawmill flumed rough lumber to Preston where it was processed in a dry kiln and finished into dimensional lumber at the planing mill or into shingles at the shingle mill.

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<sup>23</sup> Boswell, "King County Historic Settlement Context, 1850-1920," 118.

<sup>24</sup> Mary J. Mathews, "August Lovegren House" King County Landmark Registration Form, (King County Historic Preservation Program, 1994), sec. 7, p. 3. Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 3.

<sup>25</sup> Philip Lovegren, "Preston, Washington," *The Coast* (vol. XVII, June 1909): 416.

A tramway then hauled it a short distance west through a tunnel beneath the Preston-Fall City Road and uphill to the railroad for transport.<sup>26</sup> With its diversified milling capacity, the Preston Mill Co. was on sound footing to remain viable through the first three decades of the 20th century.

Lovegren was well-connected within King County's growing Swedish community, and his bustling mill attracted newly arrived Swedish immigrants seeking work.<sup>27</sup> Many who came to work at the mill in Preston were Baptist and from the Varmland province in Sweden. Clusters of families migrated to the area, reinforcing the cultural and ethnic ties of the community. At the turn of the 20th century, Preston was a small, company mill town with a general store, boarding house, grade school, and Baptist church, all within close proximity to the mill site along the Raging River.<sup>28</sup> The church and later a hotel and community building were located north of the mill. The company store was located on the slope of the west hill overlooking the mill, about where today's New Deal-era community building stands at 8625 310th Ave SE. This area, also known as middle hill or store hill, included a handful of residences, including Lovegren's impressive 1904 residence (a King County Landmark).

Following the opening of the sawmill at Upper Preston, a second company settlement developed along what is today's 324th Place SE. Swedish immigrants settled at Upper Preston, too, but these family clusters were mostly Lutherans from Sweden's Jamtland province. When Matilda Johanson first arrived at Upper Preston from Sweden in 1911, "she found a clearing, full of huge stumps, where her husband and other loggers were putting up cabins for their arriving families."<sup>29</sup> The area was and still is quite isolated, with one road in and out. There was no store in Upper Preston, making residents reliant on one another and on their neighbors and the company store in Preston proper.

In the immediate vicinity of the sawmill were portable bunkhouses, a cookhouse, and dining room. Matilda recalled that the cookhouse "stood on the edge of the Raging River's ravine."<sup>30</sup> Resident Aina Johnson recalled the cookhouse "served good hot food and packed lunches every day... Everybody seemed to meet there. We also got our mail there."<sup>31</sup> Over time, at least twenty-three small company rental houses were built in close proximity to the mill site, as well as a schoolhouse, district #90. Aida described the schoolhouse that once stood a few hundred feet south of Vasa Hall: "It had one large room downstairs with a 3 room apartment upstairs for the teacher. There was a manual shop also. A large playground with swings and a ballpark was beside the school where everyone gathered evenings."<sup>32</sup> In 1920, the number of children attending the school stood at twenty-seven.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mathews, "August Lovegren House," sec. 7, p. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Lovegren was major contributor to Swedish Baptist churches in the Puget Sound area. He and fellow Swedish industrialist C.J. Erickson were benefactors of Seattle's Adelpia College that was run by the Swedish Baptist Church from 1905 to 1919. Forssblad, "Swedes in Seattle and King County."

<sup>28</sup> Anna Larson, *The Larson Saga: The Story of August and Maria Larson*, (Unpublished manuscript, 1977 typescript. Reproduced, introduced, and illustrated by Ed Holmes), 5. Accessed Sept. 7, 2021. <https://edholmes.neocities.org/Saga.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> "Widow Recalls Flavor of Old Logging Town," *The Seattle Times*, January 21, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Aina E. Johnson, "Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Johnson, "Upper Preston," 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 23.

While the two Preston communities spoke the same language, it was “an entirely different community with a character all its own.”<sup>34</sup> There were important religious and cultural distinctions between the two settlements, with the most obvious reflected in the Baptists’ discouragement of dancing and drinking. The Lutherans of Upper Preston, however, gathered often to sing, play music, dance, eat, and drink.<sup>35</sup> These differences between the Preston Baptist and Lutheran communities are what Matilda Johanson recalled when she suggested Preston residents jokingly were called ‘saints’ and Upper Preston residents ‘sinners.’”<sup>36</sup>

As many small logging and milling operations were targeted for acquisition by Weyerhaeuser and other large firms in the early 20th century, the diversified Preston Mill Co. maintained its independence. Business was good for August Lovegren and the Preston Mill Co. in the early 1900s. In 1909, the mill output was 50,000 board feet per day of lumber, 100,000 shingles per day at Preston proper, and 60,000 shingles per day at Upper Preston. The business was valued at \$230,000, and by 1916, the company was either directly or indirectly responsible for ninety-five percent of employment in Preston.<sup>37</sup> With the company on strong footing, he sold it in 1911 – not to a large timber firm, but to fellow Swede C. J. Erickson.<sup>38</sup> During Erickson’s tenure, the company built a hotel (where it later opened a company office) and community center at Preston. The community hall had a gymnasium, swimming pool, and pool tables, and local high school basketball games were held there.<sup>39</sup>

Amidst the progress there were losses, too. In 1929, the Preston Mill Co. was hit hard by a fire that destroyed the Upper Preston sawmill and also by the economic fallout of the stock market crash. This was followed by a disastrous flood in 1932 that washed away the flume and took out the bridge crossing the Raging River at Preston. Aina Johnson recalled, “the road to Upper Preston also washed away so someone felled a couple of trees and made a ladder for us to get by... The Red Cross also came up and gave us flour, sugar, canned stuff and a large envelope of vegetable seeds.”<sup>40</sup> The economic and natural disasters forced the closure of the mill at Upper Preston, dealing a major blow to the small Swedish Lutheran community. To raise capital, the mill company began selling off all individual worker houses to Upper Preston residents who previously had been renters. Some twenty-three parcels were sold into private ownership over a three-year period. Gradually people began to make improvement to these homes. Following the 1932 flood, a long-awaited infrastructure improvement came in the form of repaired and widened roads and also electricity installed by Puget Sound Power and Light, with the help of local men.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Smithrud, “Communities of the Wood,” 12.

<sup>35</sup> Anna Larson, *The Larson Saga*, 18.

<sup>36</sup> “Widow Recalls Flavor of Old Logging Town,” *The Seattle Times*, January 21, 1970, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Lovegren, “Preston, Washington,” 416. Smithrud, “Communities of the Wood,” 11.

<sup>38</sup> Erickson was a wealthy industrialist who owned several businesses, a railroad, and a shipbuilding company. He was known for his large construction projects, including the Montlake Cut, Denny Regrade, and Bremerton dry docks. Ed Holmes and Monika Nilsson, *The Adventures of a Swede in America: The Journal of Gust Nilsson in Preston*, (self-published, 2021), 51. Accessed Dec. 14, 2021. <https://edholmes.neocities.org/Gust.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Smithrud, “Communities of the Wood,” 15.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, “Upper Preston,” 2.

<sup>41</sup> Johnson, “Upper Preston,” 3. Smithrud, “Communities of the Wood,” 22 and 26.

With the sawmill at Upper Preston closed for good, work resumed at the Preston mill after a major rebuild in 1936. Timber that was once flumed to Preston was hauled in by trucks, and within three years the mill was cutting 4,500,000 board feet of lumber.<sup>42</sup> Fires plagued the company throughout the middle and late 20th century, each stopping production and putting workers out of jobs. The railroad, which had been so instrumental in the placement of the mill town in the late 19th century, ended its freight service to Preston in 1975. Despite challenge after challenge, the mill at Preston continued to produce finished lumber through the 1990s. In 1997, it was sold to Non-Profit Trust for Public Land and transferred to King County for use as a park. The construction of I-90 through unincorporated Preston enabled the community to transition after the closure of the mill to function largely as a suburban community to the tech hubs of Redmond, Bellevue, and Seattle to the west.

### **The Vasa Hall Story – the Early Years**

Twenty years since the community of Upper Preston took shape around the company's sawmill, the settlement still lacked an adequate center of social focus, especially for adults. The idea to form a local Vasa Lodge first emerged in February of 1919 when Albert Dahl, District Master, visited fellow Swedes in Upper Preston. Discussions that very day led to the formation of Skogsblomman (Wildflower) Lodge No. 378. Officers were elected, with the sawmill's head sawyer Gustav Sander chosen as the first Chairman. Some sources report an original count of thirty, but sixty-four individuals, about one-third of them women, are listed as founding members on the Lodge's framed charter, dated February 17, 1919 (Figure B1). By year's end, membership had grown to eighty-six.<sup>43</sup>

Roughly ten years prior, a local chapter of the I.O.G.T. (a Swedish temperance organization) had constructed a modest wooden hall in Upper Preston on a one-acre parcel of land owned by Gust Sander. After hosting a major gathering in 1911, the Templars lost momentum (Figure B2). By 1919, they willingly donated the building outright to Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378, with the understanding that it would remain in community use if Vasa Lodge ever dissolved.<sup>44</sup>

Soon after occupying the building, Vasa members realized it was too small for dancing. They joined together to expand the hall, more than doubling its square footage with a large perpendicular addition. The Preston Mill Co. donated the lumber, members donated their skilled labor, and work was completed within five short months. This greatly expanded hall is the one pictured in casual snapshots appearing to date from the 1920s and 1930s, and in the King County Assessor's 1940 property record card (Figures B3 through B8).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Eric Erickson, *A Pictorial History of the Preston Mill Company, 1892-1996*, (Issaquah, WA: Issaquah History Museums, 2007), 3.

<sup>43</sup> Skogsblomman Lodge #378, c. 1928. Translated by Bonnie Eiber from Swedish. Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 21.

<sup>44</sup> "The Hall at Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 1987, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections.

<sup>45</sup> Dear Ones Letter, undated, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. Smithrud 1997, 21. Skogsblomman Lodge #378, c. 1928. Translated by Bonnie Eiber from Swedish. King County Tax Assessor, Property Record for parcel no. 032307-9030, 1940-1976.

Vasa Hall quickly became the center of community life that its founders had envisioned. Its most serious role was that of a link between immigrants and the old country. Communications to families in the event of injuries or deaths in the woods or mills, monitoring illness in the community, and providing sick benefits and death benefits up to \$100 were critical functions. A ten-year report states the donations to sick and injured during that first decade at over \$10,000. In those days, members met twice a month, with three couples volunteering on refreshments, programs, and dances. One couple would come early to light the fire and put the coffee water on. Typically, sixty to eighty members would attend.<sup>46</sup>

As a venue Vasa Hall fostered the continuity of Swedish traditions and holidays (Figure B5). Meatball dinners are said to date back to these early years, with treasured recipes passed down over time. Major milestone events with extended family and friends, such as birthdays, weddings, and golden anniversaries, kept the community close. Monthly Lutheran church services were held at the hall whenever a visiting minister could make the trip up from Seattle.<sup>47</sup>

Perhaps most beloved at Vasa Hall were the dances, held on Saturday nights, and later on Sundays with bingo games. Members and guests are said to have come from miles around in their bulky Chevy, Ford, and Hupmobile autos. People brought musical instruments, and there was usually an accordion in the mix (Figure B4). Many Swedes were serious dancers in the early days, so participation was high. The dances also served an important social role of providing a safe space for teens to mingle and young single adults to meet and to court.<sup>48</sup>

In good times and bad, through the 1920s and 1930s, Vasa Hall helped hold the community together and strengthen its connections to the outside world. In 1926, Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 joined with other area Vasa lodges to purchase land for a waterfront park some twelve miles to the northwest at Lake Sammamish. Upper Preston families would gather there and camp over summer weekends, enjoying the famous pancake breakfasts and other festivities at Midsummer. During the 1920s, Skogsblomman Lodge membership reportedly reached 350. Many members who moved away continued to belong. By 1929, however, membership had stabilized at 160.<sup>49</sup>

The Great Depression deeply affected the community of Upper Preston. Not only had the sawmill itself been closed by the end of 1929, but its very existence erased from the landscape by fire and flood. People struggled to survive with gardens and livestock, bartering, credit and charities. Men sometimes had to seek work in gyppo (independent) logging operations, or in mills far from home. Remarkably, though, the tiny community held together, due in no small part to its strong sense of identity and shared values. Vasa Hall played an important role, keeping friendships and family connections alive,

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<sup>46</sup> Skogsblomman Lodge #378, c. 1928. Translated by Bonnie Eiber from Swedish. "The Hall at Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 1987, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 22.

<sup>47</sup> Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 22, 26. Dear Ones Letter, undated, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections.

<sup>48</sup> *30th Grand Lodge Convention Souvenir Booklet*, 69, Skogsbloman Lodge #378 Collections.

<sup>49</sup> Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 21. Johnson, "Upper Preston," 2. Skogsblomman Lodge #378, c. 1928. Translated by Bonnie Eiber from Swedish.

with gatherings, holiday traditions, and dances. Notably, meetings continued to be held in Swedish throughout the decade.<sup>50</sup>

In 1930, Gust and Lisa Sander, owners of the land underlying the hall, conveyed the slightly less-than-one-acre parcel to Skogsblomman Lodge. For the first time, the Lodge held full title to both the building and the land. Around 1940, the membership accomplished a kitchen remodel, added a water heater, and possibly a new wood dance floor.<sup>51</sup>

It wasn't long before disaster struck, however. On December 21, 1943, the hall burned to the ground when Christmas decorations hanging too near to the pot-bellied wood stove caught fire during a Christmas program. Hoses were frozen, so there was little water to quell the flames.<sup>52</sup> *The Issaquah Press* stated that the fire had occurred during the early evening hours, and reported:

*The loss of this hall is of much greater importance than the loss of the value of the building to the people of Upper Preston as it was the gathering place for all social functions and they were entirely dependent on Vasa Hall for their local amusements...*<sup>53</sup>

Demoralized members traveled in March to meet for their twenty-fifth anniversary at the home of member John Ahron in Seattle. There, District officers provided replacement song books, regalia, and encouragement. Spirits were boosted enough to continue. For the rest of the decade, all while raising funds for the Red Cross and other wartime causes, the organization met in members' homes. A continuing agenda item was the challenge of finding a new hall.<sup>54</sup>

### **The Vasa Hall Story – Second Life**

Skogsblomman Lodge members focused their energy on finding a building in the vicinity that might be scheduled for demolition. In late 1948, they heard that the old company store in the mill town of Snoqualmie Falls was for sale. After World War II, production at that nearby facility had taken a sharp downturn as the availability of old growth timber diminished. Despite some physical and operational upgrades, including the introduction of reforestation practices in the 1940s, the efficiency of large-log milling had steadily declined. As a result of these market forces, the Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co. was officially absorbed by its partner, the Weyerhaeuser Timber Co., that very year.<sup>55</sup>

Vasa Hall members met to decide what might be a reasonable bid, and the sum of \$101 was suggested by member John Ahron. Several sources suggest this offer was accepted, but a receipt for \$302 paid by Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 to Weyerhaeuser on December 30, 1948 remains in Lodge files. The

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<sup>50</sup> Johnson, "Upper Preston," 2. Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 23-25.

<sup>51</sup> King County Archives, Statutory Deed, parcel no. 032307-9030. Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections, "The Hall at Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 1987.

<sup>52</sup> Dear Ones Letter, undated, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. "The Hall at Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 1987, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. Johnson, "Upper Preston," 2.

<sup>53</sup> "Fire At Preston," *The Issaquah Press*, Dec. 23, 1943, n.p.

<sup>54</sup> King County Tax Assessor, Property Record for parcel no. 032307-9030, 1940-1976. Smithrud 1997, 22. "The Hall at Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 1987, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections.

<sup>55</sup> Kirby, "Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co. Powerhouse & Brick Stack (Power Plant)," 8-9.

signed agreement with Weyerhaeuser, dated December 27, also notes the sum of \$302 as consideration for the Lodge's right to enter the property; demolish the building; remove any and all salvageable materials other than fixtures, appliances, and accessories reserved by the company; and haul all waste materials to the company's burn pit. All this was to be accomplished by January 15, 1949.

The company store was a substantial wood frame building dating from 1916-17, when the Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co. was established and the mill town around it built out. Images from that era show its columned front porch, stepped parapet, and well-lit, spacious interior with clerestory windows encircling a mezzanine (Figures B9 and B10). Sanborn Map Co. insurance maps from 1926 show the store standing just east of the railroad tracks and depot, in a triangular configuration with the community hall/gym, and the hotel/dining room. The store is also labeled as a post office on this map, and appears to have a long, single-story porch addition along its west side (Figure A8).

Able-bodied Vasa members jumped in to make the project happen. The Lodge kept a record of volunteer labor which notes work beginning on January 3rd and continuing through January 26. A crew of thirty-five men put in a total of over 2,300 volunteer hours, and some were there for as many as twenty-three days.<sup>56</sup> Although their labor is not recorded, the women of Vasa Hall made sure the men were well fed on site each day. At the end of the month, a Weyerhaeuser official sent a thank-you letter to the crew noting their good spirit, their hard work in spite of adverse weather, and:

*It gives us a great measure of satisfaction, in these days of dissensions, to contact real people who are willing and able to stick together and to work hard for the common good, not only for your fraternal lodge alone, but also for the good of the community at large.*<sup>57</sup>

It is not known whether the intention was ever to reconstruct the company store in its full footprint and volume. Sources report that it was dismantled carefully, with some elements numbered for reassembly.<sup>58</sup> Only one image survives from the reassembly job at the new site, again an all-volunteer effort (Figure B11). Early images of the rebuilt structure and its current physical appearance both suggest that the store's dimensions, scale, openings, and other details were altered by Lodge members for very practical reasons.

The most obvious difference is the absence of the columned front porch. Window openings at a clerestory level were retained around the perimeter, but were quickly covered with shingle siding, and no mezzanine was ever built back on the interior (Figure B14). A curious note on the 1956 King County Tax Assessor property record card documents the existence on site of a: "...*foundation, constructed for bldg. twice as large, no bldg. on other half of fndtn. Doesn't appear there ever will be.*" These were very likely the remnants of foundation footings from the earlier, fire-ravaged hall.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "Accounting of Hours," 1949, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections.

<sup>57</sup> Art Benson, Weyerhaeuser Timber Co., to Arthur Oberg, Vasa Lodge #378, January 29, 1948.

<sup>58</sup> Johnson, "Upper Preston," 2. Aina Johnson's mention of this in her history is a cherished anecdote passed down among lodge members.

<sup>59</sup> "The Hall at Upper Preston," Unpublished manuscript, 1987, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. Dear Ones Letter, undated, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. King County Tax Assessor, Property Record for parcel no. 032307-9030, 1940-1976.

Work on the new hall continued through 1949. A grand re-opening was held in 1950 (Figures B12 and B13). The new era was marked by a new policy – meetings were now to be held in English rather than Swedish, although traditional songs would continue to be sung in Swedish. Meetings alternated between business one month, and entertainment the next.<sup>60</sup> (Smithrud 1997, 22).

In the decades to come, Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 played a continuing role in the community. New traditions began and evolved. Meatball dinners expanded into fund-raisers and became famous. Sewing Club bazaars and recycling activities also raised funds for operations. Children's activities including language camps were launched. In 1969, the organization filed for incorporation with the State of Washington. In 1982, Skogsblomman Lodge participated in the 30th Grand Lodge's Convention in Seattle, with local members in charge of registration and the glossy souvenir program book.<sup>61</sup>

Today's organization has eighty-two members. They meet monthly, except for July and August. The group rents the hall for a nominal fee to broader community use, hosts a summer camp for children with activities in Swedish language and culture, and continues the traditional Christmas celebration with a Sankta Lucia pageant. Skogsblomman No. 378 is one of four local lodges that still work to manage and maintain Vasa Park at Lake Sammamish. Four members serve on that board, overseeing the park's operations. The upkeep of the hall itself, minor additions, and improvements to its functionality continue to be one of the Lodge's high priorities. Now, as ever, "community" and Skogsblomman membership are essentially one and the same.

In 2019, members celebrated the 100th anniversary of Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378 with a festive party that featured traditional Swedish dancers, music, and food (see figure B17). A description of the Lodge's significance – to Preston's timber heritage, its Swedish culture, its community pride – first appeared in its biographical sketch in the Grand Lodge Convention's program book in 1982. The description still rings true today:

*Who would have guessed that a casual conversation on a sunny afternoon in 1919 would lead to a love affair between a lodge and a community that has lasted for 63 years [now 102 years]. There is no other place in District No. 13 where the life of a community and the lodge has been so completely entwined as with Upper Preston and Skogsblomman Lodge.*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Smithrud, "Communities of the Wood," 22.

<sup>61</sup> 30th Grand Lodge Convention Souvenir Booklet, 69, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections. Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Articles of Incorporation, State of Washington, 1969.

<sup>62</sup> 30th Grand Lodge Convention Souvenir Booklet, 69, Skogsblomman Lodge #378 Collections.



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Figure C12. View of Vasa Hall from 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE, facing east.  
Figure C13. Vasa Hall's unfinished attic space. Photo courtesy of Ed Jones, 2020.

Figure C14. Vasa Hall's north side, view facing south.

Figure C15. Vasa Hall's south side, view facing north.

Figure C16. View of the kitchen wing that wraps around the southwest corner of the building, facing north.

Figure C17. View of the corner kitchen wing and the gabled entry addition, facing north.

Figure C18. View of Vasa Hall's primary elevation, facing east.

Figure C19. View toward the stage in the assembly hall, facing east.

Figure C20. View from the stage in the assembly hall, facing west.

Figure C21. Assembly hall interior (light fixture, vertical pressboard, and wainscotting).

Figure C22. View of entry hall and accessible restroom.

Figure C23. View of entry hall and double doors leading to assembly hall.

Figure C24. View of kitchen.

Figure C25. Mural painted on the back wall of the stage.

## Section A – Maps & Aerial Images

Figure A1. Current map of region, with red arrow noting the location of Vasa Hall. King County iMap, 2021.

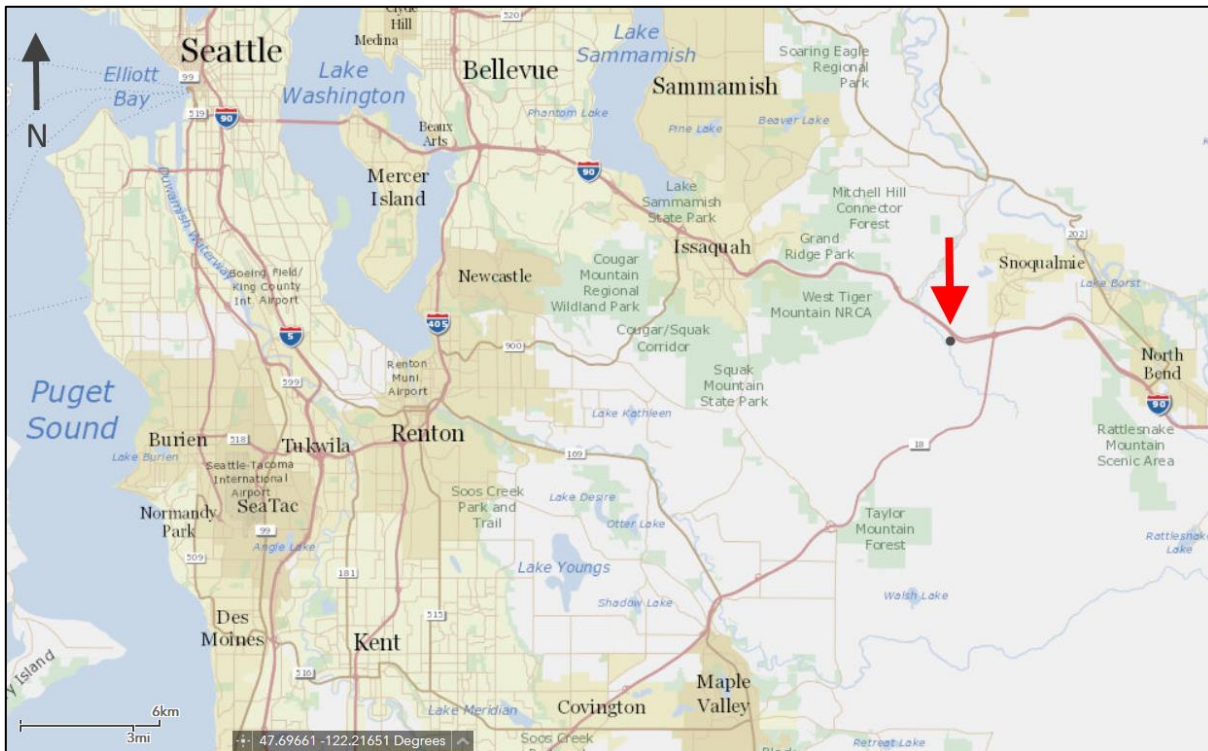


Figure A2. Current map of Preston and Upper Preston, with Vasa Hall circled. King County iMap, 2021.

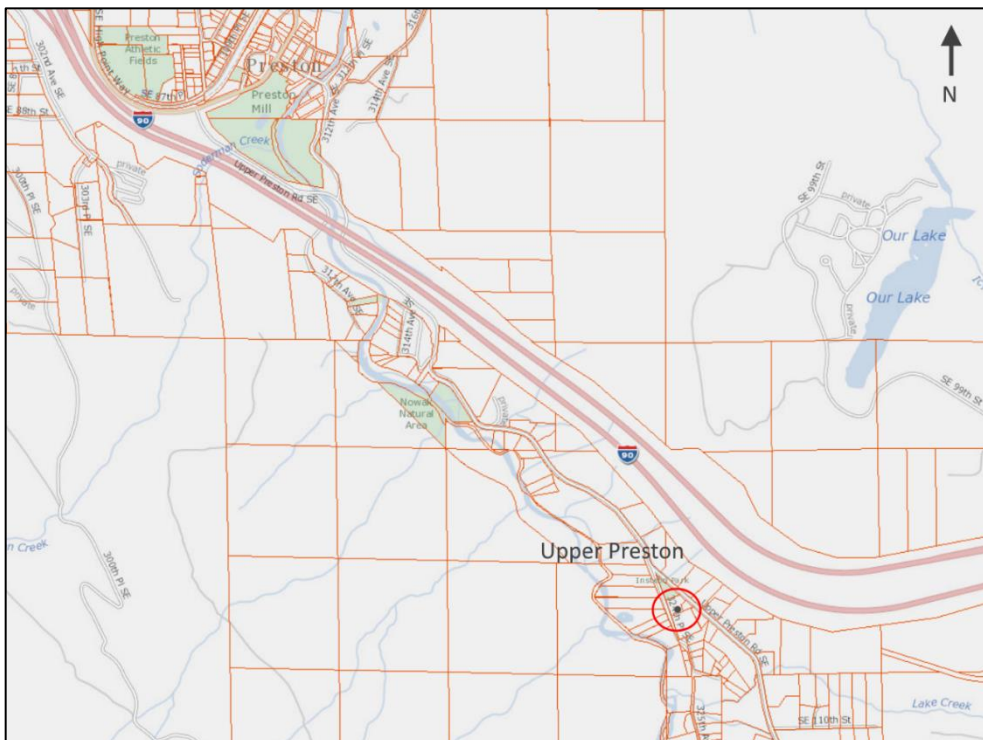




Figure A3. Current aerial image of Upper Preston, with I-90 at upper right. The Vasa Hall parcel is shaded in orange. Parcel no. 032307-9030. Latitude/Longitude: 47.505960/-121.908127. King County iMap, 2021.





Figure A4. Current aerial image of Vasa Hall with orange line showing approximate parcel boundary. Parcel no. 032307-9030. Latitude/Longitude: 47.505960/-121.908127. King County iMap, 2021.



Figure A5. Map of Upper Preston showing approximate location of sawmill, pond, and flume. Google, 2021.



Figure A6. Sanborn Map Co.'s Insurance Map of Preston (Upper Preston Mill inset), 1912 (page 1).

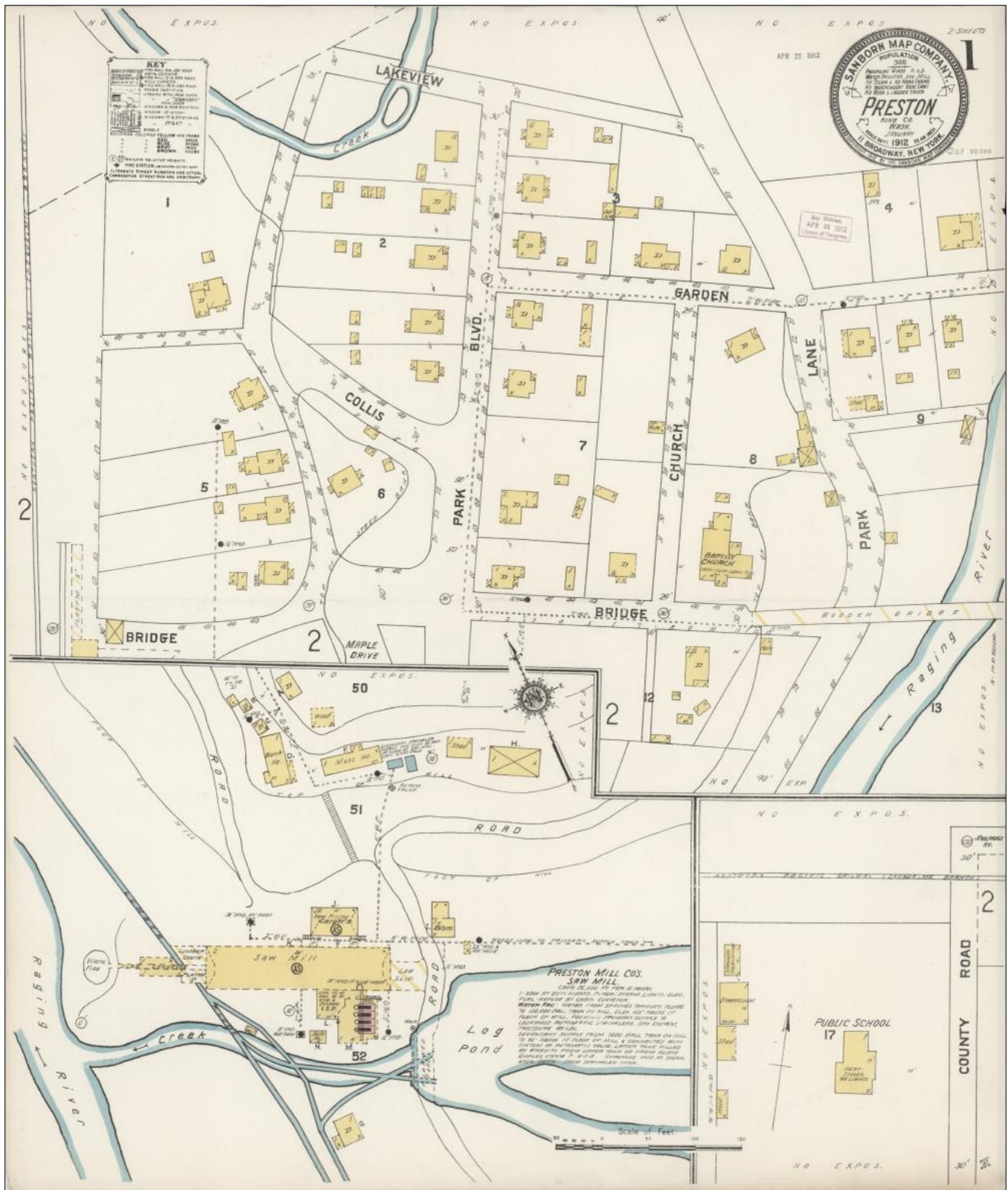




Figure A7. Sanborn Map Co.'s Insurance Map of Preston, 1912 (page 2).

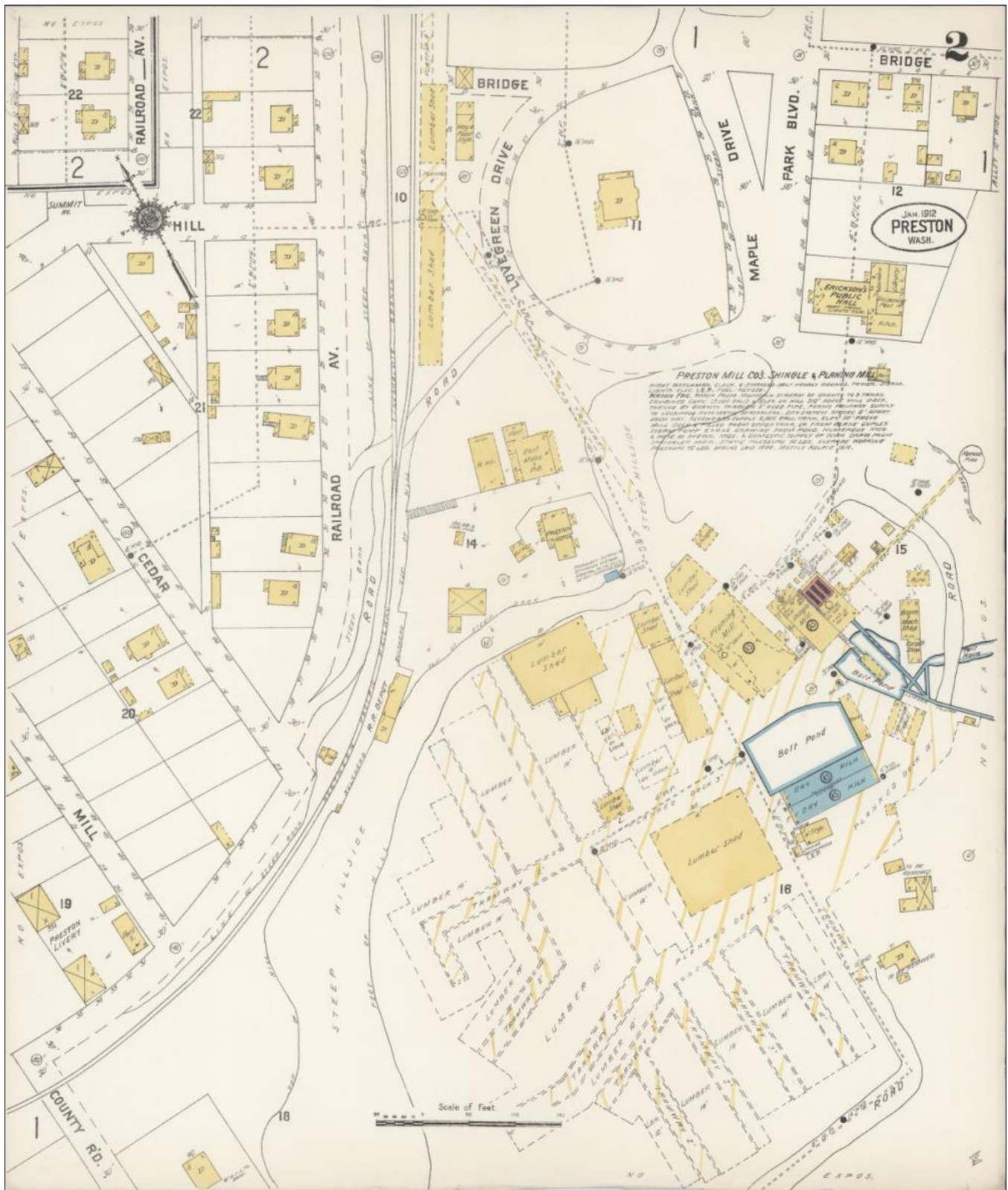


Figure A8. Sanborn Map Co.'s Insurance Map of Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co., with general store outlined in red, 1926 (page 6).

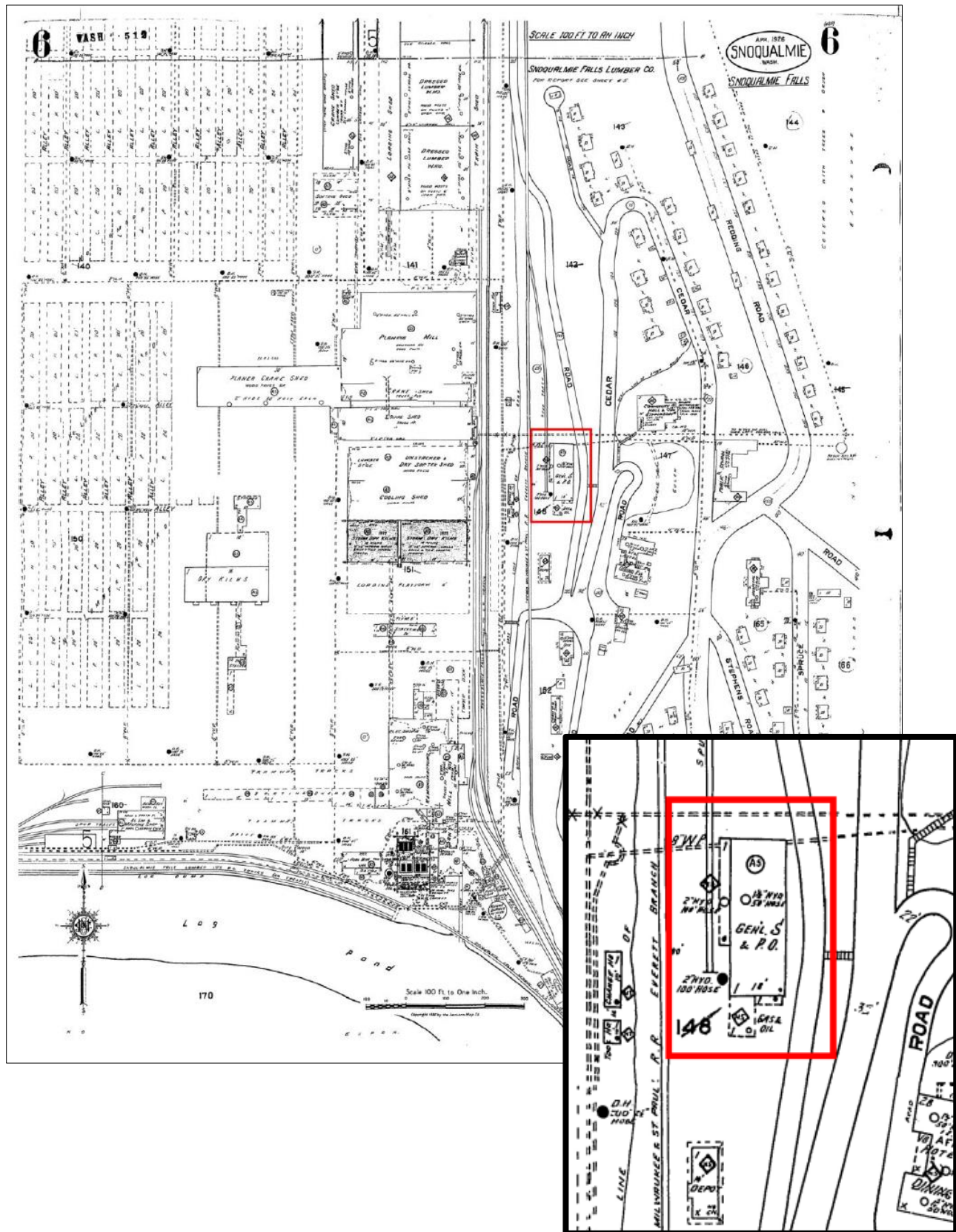




Figure A9. Martin General Agency, Preston Mill Co., with Upper Preston sawmill inset, 1928.



## Section B – Historic Photographs & Clippings

Figure B1. Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378's framed charter, dated February 17, 1919. It hangs in the lodge's assembly hall.

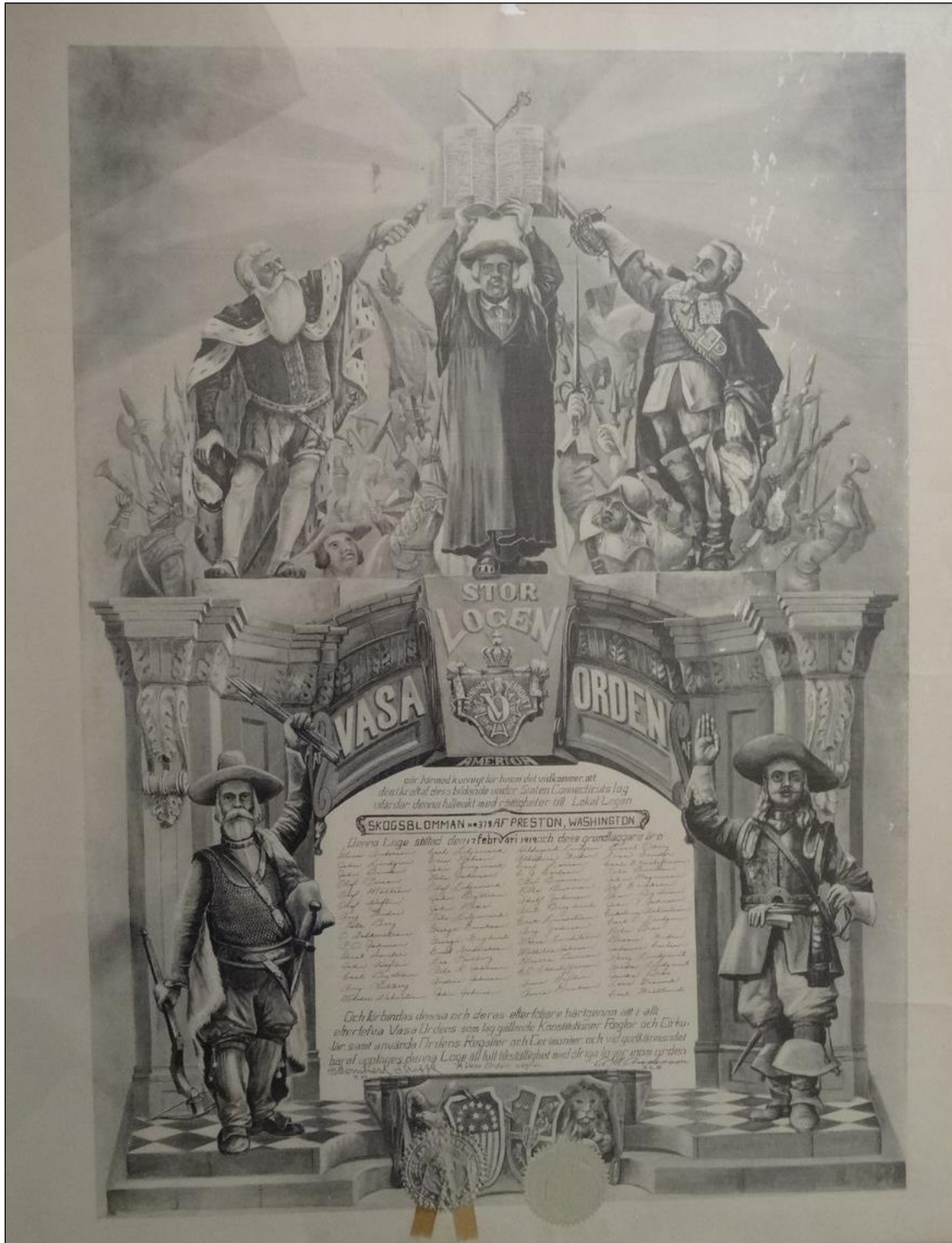




Figure B2. Members of the local I.G.O.T. standing in front of their building, c. 1915.



Figure B3. Old Vasa Hall at Upper Preston, undated. The front-gable portion is the former I.O.G.T. hall.



Figure B4. Lodge members gathered in front of Old Vasa Hall at Upper Preston, c. 1920s.



**Vasa Hall, Upper Preston gathering place, circa 1920 – Lynette Widen Hedges collection**

Figure B5. Old Vasa Hall interior, c. 1920s.



**Vasa Hall Interior circa 1920, Monika Nilsson collection**



Figure B6. A group is gathered in front of Old Vasa Hall at Upper Preston, undated.



Figure B7. Old Vasa Hall floor plan, 1940. King County Tax Assessor records.

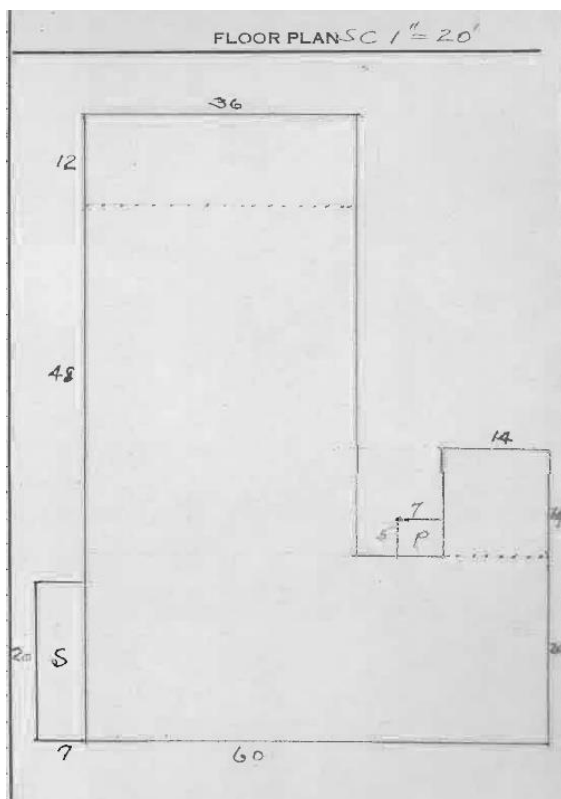


Figure B8. Old Vasa Hall, 1940. King County Tax Assessor records.



Figure B9. Company Store, Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co., 1917.





Figure B10. Interior of Company Store, Snoqualmie Falls Lumber Co., 1917.



Figure B11. Men building Vasa Hall, 1949.

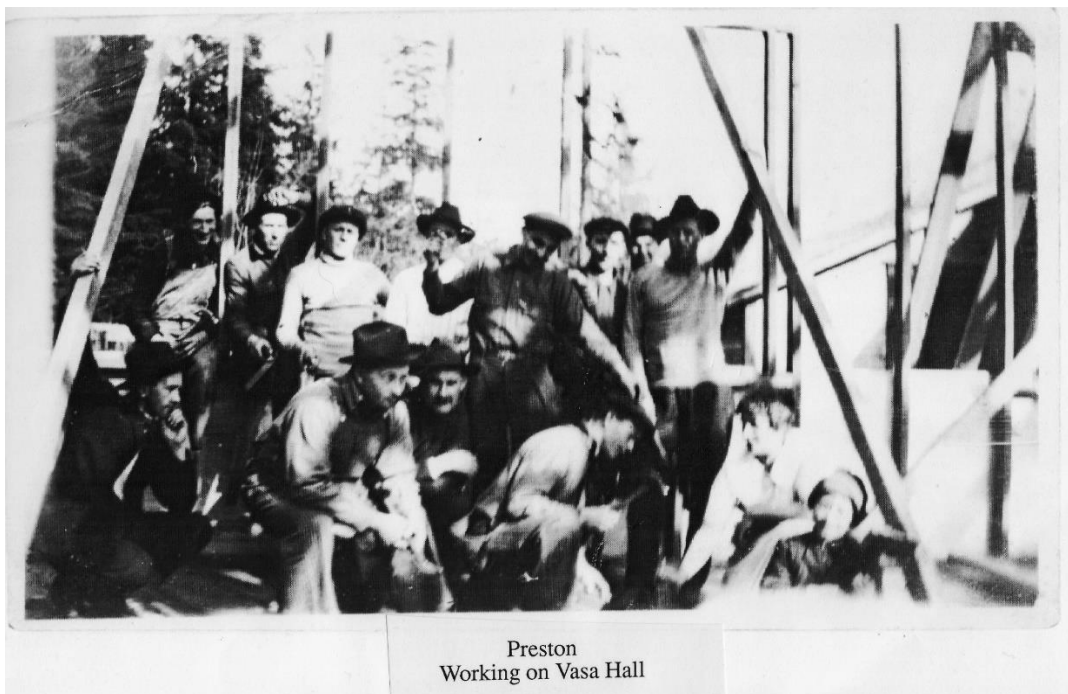


Figure B12. Grand Opening of new Vasa Hall, 1950. View of stage.



Figure B13. Interior of Vasa Hall, before the kitchen was expanded. Note the stovepipe and the pass-through window at the back. Undated.

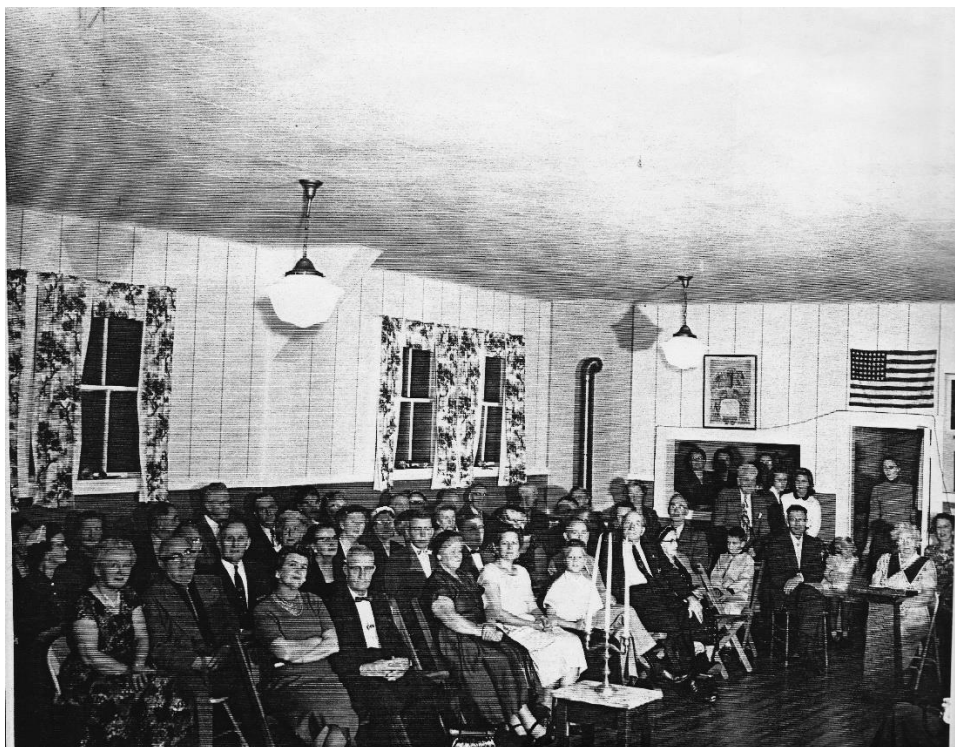




Figure B14. Vasa Hall, 1956. King County Tax Assessor records.



Figure B15. Vasa Hall, 1956. King County Tax Assessor records.

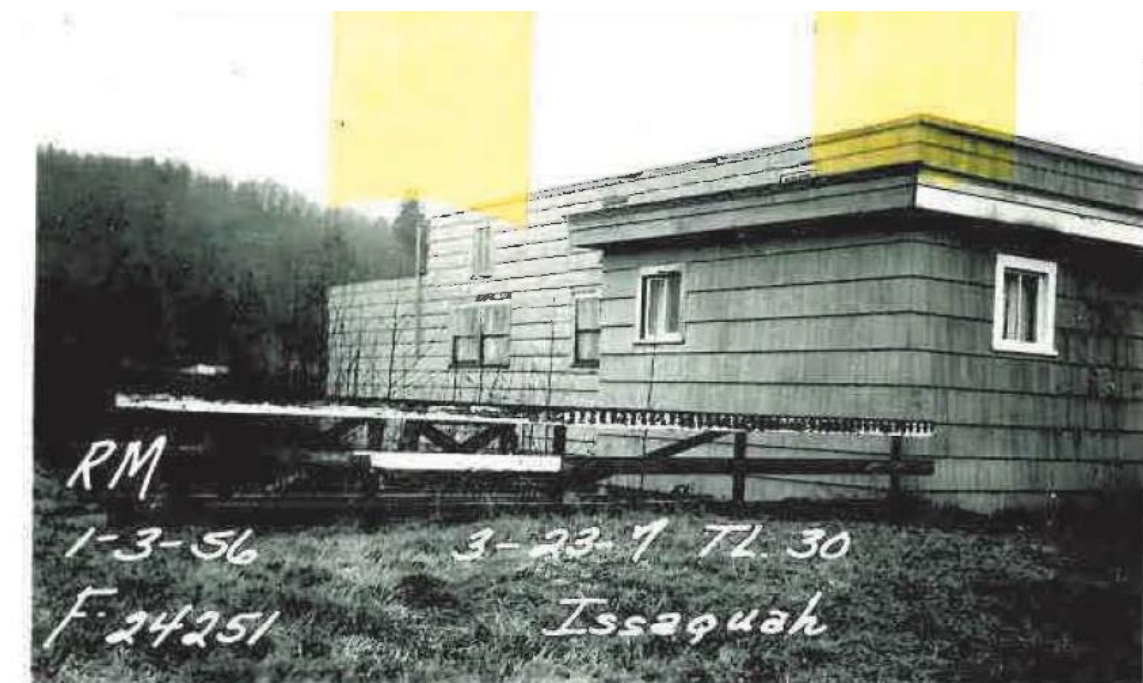


Figure B16. Vasa Hall floorplans. Left floorplan is 1956. Right floorplan is sometime between 1956-1976.

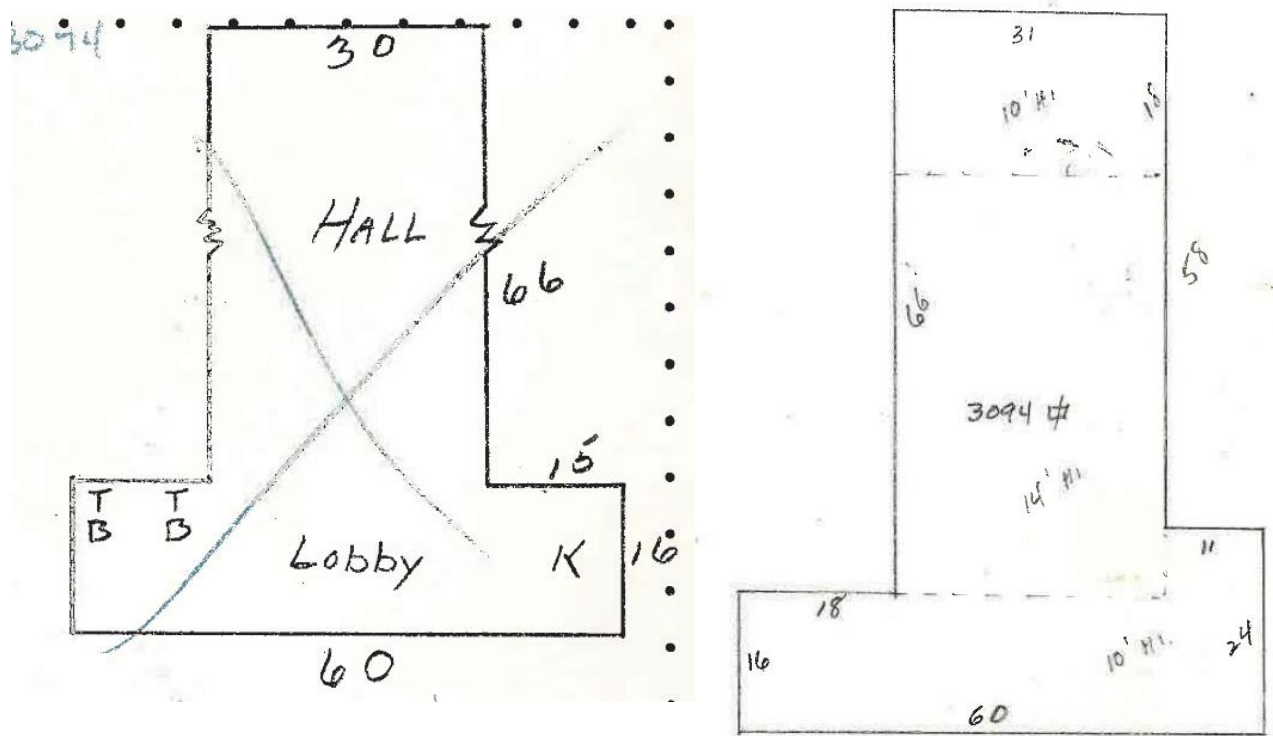


Figure B17. Skogsblomman Lodge No. 378's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary gathering. 2019.





**Section C – Recent & Current Photographs** (all photos taken in August-September 2021)

Figure C1. Overall view of Vasa Hall, facing east.



Figure C2. View east of bridge on Preston-Fall City Road, looking toward the Preston Mill site from 310<sup>th</sup> Ave. SE.





Figure C3. View of Preston Mill site, facing southwest. Taken from Preston Mill Park parking lot. 8/2021



Figure C4. View of August Lovegren residence on Preston's middle hill (310<sup>th</sup> Ave SE), facing south.





Figure C5. View southwest, looking toward the Preston Mill site in the distance, from steps connecting top hill and middle hill. The WPA community center is in the foreground.



Figure C6. View of houses along 310<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, Preston's middle hill.





Figure C7. View of the old Northern Pacific railroad path, today's Preston-Snoqualmie Trail, facing northeast.



Figure C8. View of 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE, near the former sawmill site at Upper Preston, facing north.





Figure C9. View of older house along 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE, near the former sawmill site at Upper Preston, facing east.



Figure C10. View of older house along 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE, near the former sawmill site at Upper Preston, facing west.





Figure C11. View of 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE at Upper Preston, with Vasa Hall in the distance, facing northeast.



Figure C12. View of Vasa Hall from 324<sup>th</sup> Place SE, facing east.





Figure C13. Vasa Hall's unfinished attic space. Photo courtesy of Ed Jones, 2020.



Figure C14. Vasa Hall's north side, view facing south. Note the three louvered shutters over clerestory openings that provide ventilation and access to the attic space, pictured above.





Figure C15. Vasa Hall's south side, view facing north.



Figure C16. View of the kitchen wing that wraps around the southwest corner of the building, facing north.





Figure C17. View of the corner kitchen wing and the gabled entry addition, facing north.



Figure C18. View of Vasa Hall's primary elevation, facing east.





Figure C19. View toward the stage in the assembly hall, facing east.

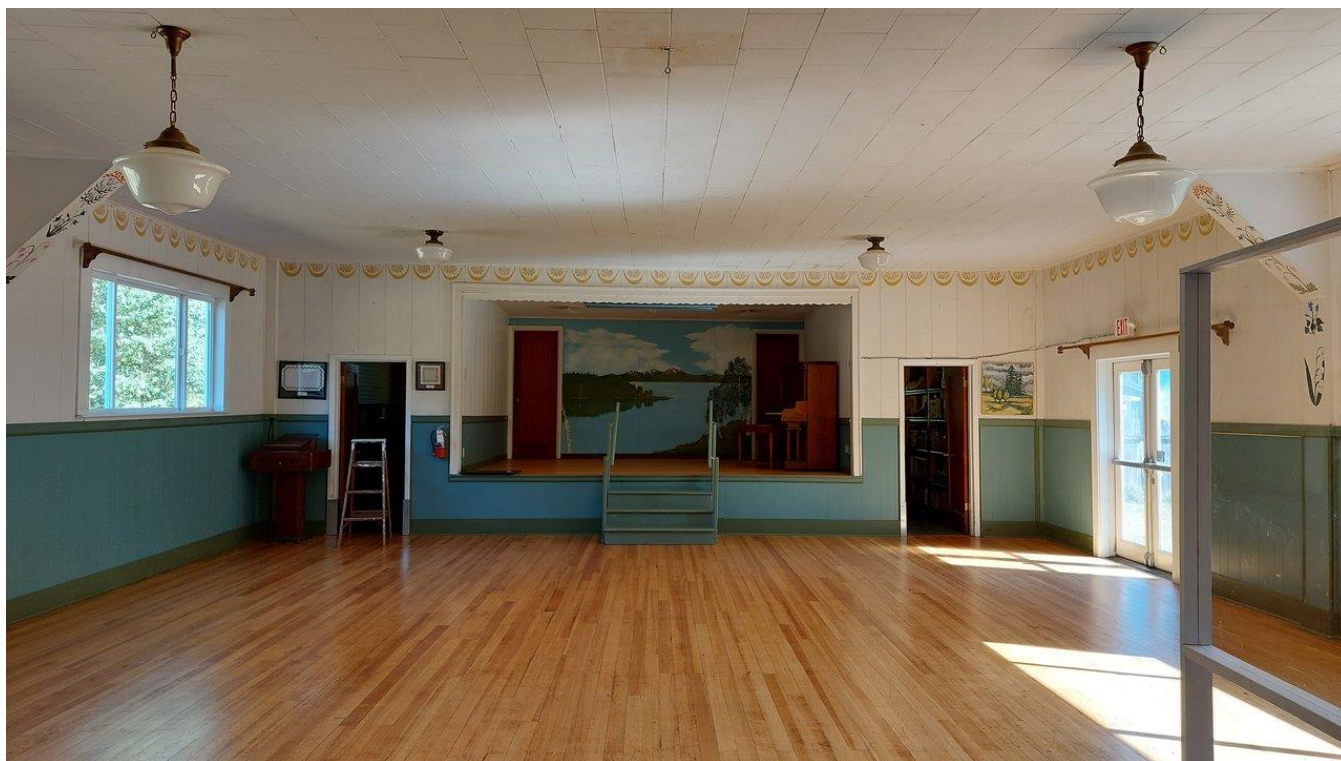


Figure C20. View from the stage in the assembly hall, facing west toward kitchen and entry hall.



Figure C21. Assembly hall interior. Note the light fixtures, vertical wall panels of pressboard, and wide bead-boarded wainscotting.



Figure C22. View of entry hall and accessible restroom.





Figure C23. View of entry hall and double doors leading to assembly hall.



Figure C24. View of kitchen. Note the beadboard ceiling, vertical pressboard walls, and painted upper cabinets that appear to be original.



Figure C25. Mural painted on the back wall of the stage.



## PART IV: MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

### 9. Previous Documentation

Use the space below to cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form (use continuation sheet if necessary).

Previous documentation on file:

- ☒ included in King County Historic Resource Inventory
- ☐ previously designated a King County Landmark
- ☐ previously designated a Community Landmark
- ☐ listed in Washington State Register of Historic Places
- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing
- ☐ (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings, Survey #:
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering, Rec. #:

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ King County Historic Preservation Program
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other (specify repository)

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